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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Barbu, D. (2005). Can democracy be its own enemy?: the intended consequences of the 2004 Romanian elections. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 5(1), 9-17. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56257-8>

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Can Democracy Be its Own Enemy?

The Intended Consequences of the 2004 Romanian Elections

DANIEL BARBU

Ironically enough, the way state socialism took its leave from the history of Romanians bestowed on elections the privilege to become the central political resource of the post-communist transformations. Unlike what had befallen during the great revolutionary movements of earlier periods (French, American, Russian), state socialism has been replaced by a multi-party democracy, that is by a type of political regime that predated it both in chronological and logical terms, and which it had once dismissed from the Romanian constitutional life. Suffice it to say that the demise of communism is often considered to be a unique kind of revolution, one that looks into the past, over the decayed shoulders of state socialism, for its theory and models. To use a Marxian language, representative democracy eventually expropriated its own expropriator. Accordingly, the post-communist society was inclined to make use of elections as a substitute for the social divides leveled by communism.

In Romania, the downfall of state socialism was not a negotiated process involving a plurality of would-be political actors, but an abrupt event staged by a single performer, the Communist Party itself. An important, if not obligatory juncture on the democratization path was thus skipped over, as no public debate on the legitimacy of regime change, and on rules that should regulate the competition between state sovereignty and civic autonomy was ever organized. Communism's breakdown was taken to be as natural an occurrence as its governance. In consequence, post-communism was reluctant to immediately institutionalize and legitimize the conflicts of opinions and interests, and was slow in considering the emergence of new social divides as normal fallouts of democracy. Long after December 22nd 1989, Romanian society continued to look for anti-political aggregation blueprints.

First, a genuine institutional structure of the revolution was not put in place, as a proper revolutionary theory would have deemed necessary. From December 1989 to June 1990, the country was merely run by a provisional government that did not fill the gap between two totally different states, but aimed at the reform, be it radical, of the socialist state and of the socialist mode of production. Although Romania has traveled across a revolutionary stage, most of the pieces of the socialist state began to fall in their previous place, or in a nearby one. If, as Marx believed, the state is but the executive board of a ruling class, it follows that the communist apparatus had no reason to declare bankruptcy, but needed only to reform its institutional assets in order to be even more competitive on the new political market.

Thus, the political class that controlled the state during and after December 1989 was able to turn to its own account the repeal of state socialism. For the lesson they learned from Leninism is that, in order to take over the political initiative, it is of outmost importance to understand before the opponent does "what is to be

done" in order to make a given majority believe that its toils and concerns are properly phrased and better voiced. The communist local leadership already acted, in the 1970s and 1980s as a mediator between a socialist state officially determined to plan the future and the current demands of a society lost in the present¹. Long before it became the democratic and legal organization of the former communist networks of mediation and participation, the National Salvation Front was the best administrator of the downfall of communism deemed as "the end of the future", and, by the same token, the only legitimate agency of the state and, through the fiction of its "revolutionary emanation", the sole grass-roots representative of the post-socialist society.

The successor political organizations (dubbed after serial partitions and fusions National Salvation Front, National Democrat Salvation Front, Party of the Social Democracy of Romania, and Social Democrat Party) were instrumental in disengaging from state socialism to the extent they managed to remain, as the Communist Party used to be in its late stage, a coalition of mayors, industrial managers, civil servants, union and cooperative leaders, tradesmen, farmers, schoolteachers and the like, all concerned with accommodating national policies, be them European Union oriented, to their local interests. Incidentally, the Social Democrats were implementing the solution given by Montesquieu to the question of the best political regime: good governance demands that the weight of the central power be "mediatized" – as the term was used in the German Empire – and embodied by a plurality of local elites endowed with effective authority and a large autonomy of decision. If that is the case, Romanian journalists have been uninspired when they dubbed these elites, whose influence prevailed in local politics and business under the 2001-2004 government, as "local barons". They should rather be classed with the dukes of the *République des ducs* which replaced in France, after 1870, the liberal and centralist Second Empire. Against the administration of the Democrat Convention (1997-2000), that placed reliance on the normative force of the decisions taken by the national government, the Social Democrats have ruled the country by remobilizing the social networks of state socialism under the informal jurisdiction of the traditional local *patrons*².

As the last embodiment of the Communist Party³, the Social Democrats were compelled – in government (1992-1996, 2001-2004) and in opposition (1997-2000) – to set up an organization conducive to political participation and embedded in intricate networks of civil society. However, the Social Democrat Party should neither

¹ For a detailed analysis of political participation under state socialism see Daniel BARBU, "Participation politique et clivages politiques en Roumanie. Du communisme au post-communisme", in Jean-Michel DE WAELE (édité par), *Les clivages politiques en Europe Centrale et Orientale*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, 2004, pp. 137-165.

² Random examples of such Social Democrat patrons that were already in charge of social networks of bargaining and mutual obligations before 1989 are Ion Stan, president of the party organization of Dâmbovița and former boss of the socialist convenience stores of the county, or Mircea Deaconu, executive president of the party organization of Vrancea, and former director of the forest holding of the county.

³ Alexandra IONESCU, "Régime politique, partis et bureaucratie d'État", in *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. III, no. 4, 2003, pp. 877-899.

be regarded as a representative or advocate of civil society before state authorities, nor as an independent negotiator between state and society, but rather as a state agency which task was to translate the legal language of governmental policies into a diversity of social dialects used by various and often antagonist interests. This function of interpreting the state and its policies in the idiom of society is only by incident related to the similar function fulfilled by western political parties¹. Indeed, the renewed or transfigured communist parties are not a creation of civil society. They initiated their post-communist career as part of the state. Even as the steadiest part of the socialist state. This would be the only way to explain the disciplined behavior of the public administration and economic management after the formal demise of Romanian totalitarianism on December 22nd 1989. That particular day, the Communist Party officially vanished away for good as a public organization but did not give up his position of informal negotiator between a state unwilling to transform itself and a diffident society unaware it may become a self-ascertained and self-reliant body politic².

In the long run, a *party democracy*³ was probably the expected outcome of the sudden institutional retirement of the Communist Party as a social mediator. Since the 1992 elections, and beyond any constitutional arrangement, what might be considered to be, with a term designed to capture the Italian political landscape, a genuine *particracy*⁴ was set up as a method of government in which parties hold jointly the complete monopoly of all political personnel, resources and policies. *Particracy* should be understood as different from the more traditional party government, to the extent the parties not only colonize and capitalize on all public institutions and positions that make up the political regime, but they rather become the regime itself⁵.

Such a regime does not function as a sum total of the public institutions and of the normative regulations of the state, but as a totality of the parties competing for power. *L'État c'est nous* might say these parties who stand above the law as long as, being in absolute control of both legislative and executive branches, they make and tell the law, including the one pertaining to their own organization. Post-communist Romanian parties act to some degree, and in a rather perverse manner, as a constitutional monarch. They rule, but they do not govern. Undeniably, state socialism used to be less interested in producing legislation than in inducing social behavior. On the contrary, post-communist governments measure their performances by the volume of their normative production and are indifferent to the legal behavior of the citizens. For instance, in January 1998, the Prime Minister of that

¹ Peter MAIR, "Party Organizations: From Civil Society to the State", in Richard S. KATZ, Peter MAIR (eds), *How Parties Organize. Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*, Sage, London and Thousand Oaks, 1994, p. 8.

² A state-in-society perspective, as advanced by Joel S. MIGDAL, *State in Society. Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 2001, is useful in ascertaining the contribution of the Communist Party in interlacing state and society.

³ V. Bernard MANIN, *Principes du gouvernement représentatif*, Flammarion, Paris, 1995, pp. 270-272.

⁴ For the scope and meaning of the term see Mauro CALISE, "The Italian Particracy: Beyond President and Parliament", in *Political Science Quarterly* 109/3, 1994, pp. 442-444.

⁵ Gianfranco PASQUINO, *Il sistema politico italiano. Autorità, istituzioni, società*, Bononia University Press, Bologna, 2002, pp. 15-21.

time was arguing against what was generally considered the failure of his government by underlining that he had issued in twelve months 1 500 ordinances, executive orders and decisions. For him, this was clear evidence of the efficiency of his mandate. This frame of mind was not singular. Post-communist governments compete with each other in terms of the quantity of legislation they manufacture and promote.

This Romanian brand of *particracy* is not limited to the joint control political parties exercise over the branches of power, including the judicial one, or to the escalating legislative inflation. Unlike in the presidential or parliamentary regimes, in a *particracy* – and the Romanian one is no exception – the head of the government is often appointed outside, if not against, the logic of the electoral process¹. Theodor Stolojan in 1991, Nicolae Văcăroiu one year after, Victor Ciorbea in 1996 and Mugur Isărescu in 1999 were Prime Ministers who never run for any nationally elected office. They ended up at heading the government because they were hand picked by the President. As opposite, in December 2000 and in December 2004, the designated Prime Ministers were in command of major coalitions of parliamentary parties. Still, in both instances, Adrian Năstase was the head figure of the coalition that got most popular votes and the largest number of mandates in both Houses of the Parliament. In 2000, his coalition of the Party of the Social Democracy, the Social Democrat Party and the Humanist Party amounted together to 3 968 464 votes for the House, which represented 36.61% of the ballots and 44.92% of the seats, *i.e.* 155 representatives. Similar proportions were obtained in the Senate. At the November 28, 2004 elections, the coalition of the Social Democrats and Humanists, presided over by the same Adrian Năstase withstood the natural erosion of them being for four years in office and got 3 730 532 votes for the House, representing 36.8% of the ballots, which gave them 132 seats, that is 39.75% of the total number of seats. And there is more to it. In the immediate aftermath of both elections, Adrian Năstase could count on the support of the Hungarian Democrat Union, formalized in 2004 by an electoral agreement. That is, Adrian Năstase could rely in 2000 on 27 more representatives (7.82% of the seats) and in 2004 on a bonus of 22 Hungarians representatives (6.62% of the seats)².

However, the fact that Năstase formed the government in 2000 but was not nominated in 2004 is not related to the slightly inferior results his coalition and electoral alliances have obtained in the latter elections. He claimed in both occasions the right to become Prime Minister as leader of the largest plurality, if not majority, in Parliament. This pretence was denied in 2004 by the President. Notwithstanding that the Alliance of the Liberals and Democrats legged 5 points and half a million votes behind the Social Democrats, Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu was called by the new President to assemble a coalition government. Not only he succeeded in so doing, but he was also able to ground his cabinet on a parliamentary majority different from the one voted in by the citizens on elections day. How can it be?

First, it is fair to say that Adrian Năstase contention to take over again the government in 2004 was but a lip tribute to the popular vote. As an experienced veteran the Romanian *particracy* he knew that it was not for him to be in charge of the government. He was himself a candidate in the presidential elections and he

¹ Mauro CALISE, *Dopo la partitocrazia. L'Italia tra modelli e realtà*, Einaudi, Torino, 1994, p. 42.

² The best presentation and analysis of Romanian elections from 1990 to 2000 in Cristian PREDA, *România postcomunistă și România interbelică*, Meridiane, București, 2002, pp. 13-60.

was defeated by Traian Băsescu in the second round with a difference shy of 250 000 votes. Therefore, he immediately ran for the office of speaker of the House, position he won with no real difficulty, as leader of a parliamentary majority designed by the popular vote and enhanced by political and electoral agreements. He indicated this way that, in spite of what ballots, pledges and protocols may point out politically, the nomination for the Prime Minister's office is a presidential prerogative of a discretionary nature.

Secondly, the new President took up, as his predecessors did, the task of establishing a *presidential majority* different from the one indicated by suffrage. And he did that at the expense of all electoral and political agreements that were signed before the elections. In fact, *particracy* itself was its main ally. In post-communist Romania, governments are not the democratic outcome of elections. Rather, elections are a tool to legitimize governments appointed by the President. Since as early as 1866, Romania has experienced what might be called by analogy a "dualist regime"¹. As in the constitutional arrangement of the Second French Empire, the original Belgian constitution or the Albertine Statute, executive and legislative powers were shared by the Palace and the Parliament. In Romania, from 1866 to 1938, this power sharing was regulated by the following mechanism: the King nominated a Prime Minister, the Prime Minister organized elections that, for not being free and fair, offered him a solid majority upon which he relied until the King decided to charge another politician, form a different party, to form a new cabinet². Communism did not completely disrupt this political device and even made some use of it as the Parliaments of state socialism were always summoned by governments appointed by the supreme leadership of the Communist Party, which in turn used elections as a method of validating its scientific Marxist-Leninist understanding of politics and society.

To be sure, the post-communist political regime was prompt in reverting to dualism as a basic constitutional practice³. This proclivity was once again confirmed in 2004 by the most typical product of Romanian *particracy*, the Humanist Party. Since its foundation in 1991, the party never ran in elections on its own account. Nevertheless, he managed to obtain parliamentary seats in 2000 and 2004 in coalition with the Social Democrats and even to have an episodic hand in the government. Albeit after the 2000 elections, it was not entitled by law to set up parliamentary groups under its label, the party was eventually granted all the privileges incumbent on a parliamentary party. And those privileges were significant in the organization of the 2004 local and general elections, which clearly favored parliamentary parties over extra-parliamentary ones. In 2004, its share of seats was large enough to allow the Party to establish parliamentary groups in both Houses and to become the pivotal agency of the very functioning of the regime. The Humanist leader explicitly engaged in what could be described as a variety of *consociational* politics⁴: on the one hand he backed the Social Democrats in their effort to win the influential positions of speakers of the two Houses, but, on the other hand, he

¹ Guglielmo FERRERO, *Pouvoir. Les Génies invisibles de la Cité*, Librairie Générale Française, Paris, 1988, pp. 111-114.

² Daniel BARBU, *Republica absentă. Politică și societate în România postcomunistă*, 2nd ed., Nemira, București, 2004, pp. 172-174.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 175-177.

⁴ Arend LIJPHART, *Democracy in Plural Societies. A Comparative Exploration*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1977, pp. 25-47.

pulled his party out of the National Union with the Social Democrat Party in order to support and to be part of the government of the Liberal-Democrat Alliance. For the first time in post-communist Romanian politics, Dan Voiculescu voiced – through his actions and in various public interventions – an explicit definition of *particracy*: no one party should be excluded from power and no single party should be allowed to indulge in a monopolistic exploitation of the state. Or, in other words, whatever the result of an election, nobody loses and nobody wins. Losses and gains should rather be shared by all parties-in-Parliament. This is why the President can always muster up a presidential majority. Like in any dualist regime, the head of state is both the executive officer and the warrant of a stable and established party system. As the constitutional resident of the Palace is, since 1990, elected by universal suffrage, it entails that the only election that really does matter is the presidential one. The popular vote replaced the dynastic succession of the constitutional monarchy and democratic centralism of the communist age in establishing who should be the definitive depositor of the national sovereignty, as well as its authoritative exegete.

What was Traian Băsescu supposed to infer after the November 28, 2004 elections? Having been elected in the run off with 5 126 794 votes standing for 28% of the electoral body and 51.23% of the actual ballots, he had to work with a Parliament composed of parties and coalitions that passed the threshold, which gathered 8 866 764 votes, representing 87.47% of the citizens that cast their ballots (10 136 460) and 48.06% of the 18 449 344 registered voters¹. This is a percentage comparable to the 2000 elections, but disconnect from the 1992 and 1996 elections, when the parties that made their way into Parliament relied on the ballots of about 60% of the registered voters². In November 2004, except for the Greater Romania Party, all the parties were bound by political or electoral agreements. On one side stood the political family of the new President, the Alliance Justice and Truth of the Liberals and Democrats, which was upheld by 31.48% of the voters, *i.e.* 17.29% of the registered voters³. They were challenged by the incumbent coalition of the National Union of the Social Democrats and Humanists associated with the Hungarian Party. Together, they amounted to 43% of the actual vote and 23.62% of the electoral body, more than the ballots Băsescu himself carried in the first round of the presidential elections, when he was supported by only 19.21% of the electoral body. In order to overturn the results of the parliamentary elections, which obviously favored the Social Democrats and their allies, the President had to negotiate his own majority, based on the annulment or disruption of any previous political agreement. The logic of *particracy* worked for him and the Alliance Justice and Truth with 3 191 546 votes, the Hungarian Democrat Union with 628 125 votes and the Humanists with a virtual share of 630 000 votes (estimated on the number of mandates they have gotten) succeeded in putting up a government supported by 24% of the registered voters and 44% of the actual voters. The political uncertainty generated by the unexpected outcome of the presidential elections was only apparent, as all parties were fully aware that, in government or in opposition, they ultimately participate in the same joint-venture.

In the Romanian setting, *particracy* best expresses the fact that the executive branch is not a political arrangement through which the citizens of a democracy

¹ The results are taken from the official press releases of the Central Electoral Bureau.

² Daniel BARBU, *Republica absentă*, cit., pp. 198-202.

³ All figures stand for the House; the vote for the Senate has very similar numbers.

mutually agree to solve their conflicts and to translate into a common political language their particular social, economic and cultural expectations, but a bureaucratic machine that manages current affairs in the name and place of an yet unaccomplished body politic¹. As the electoral slogans of Traian Băsescu's campaign for the office of mayor of Bucharest in 2000 candidly stated, *the business of the citizen is to vote, and the business of the elected official is to hold his office the best he can*. If, as it was famously suggested, politics is a war continued by other means, Romanian politics should be construed as business pursued by other means. The average Romanian politician is equally an entrepreneur. As opposed to the modern ideal-type of the democratic politician², he neither lives for politics nor lives off it. He usually uses politics to promote his own business. Successful businessmen are in turn commonly considered to be the most able candidates for ministerial positions. The legislative branch of the government is primarily a business outfit that operates like a chamber of commerce: tax exemptions, compensations and returns are granted to select companies, trade interests are balanced, financial resources are extracted from work and consumption and used for the consolidation of the private capital. The visible hand of the state is thus ministering to a variety of capitalism yet short of capitalists³, and which has to be bred by political entrepreneurs for their own use.

Unsurprisingly, one issue loomed larger than any other on the new government's agenda: the introduction of a flat taxation rate of 16% tailored to favor capital over work. Though it was promised and promoted by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, the idea has no partisan character, but belongs to the common list of items of the Romanian *particracy*. It was advanced in the spring of 2004 by the Finance minister of Social Democrat government of that time, Mihai Tănăsescu, and was immediately hailed by the Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, only to be sternly rejected by Ion Iliescu as alien to the spirit of social democracy. The regime being resolutely dualist, the President had the last word and this inter-partisan matter had to wait for a new President in order to be turned into a public policy.

If it is quite uncertain that Traian Băsescu won the elections of 2004 because he endorsed the flat rate taxation principle as a propitious one to the nascent Romanian middle class, in exchange the opposite may be true: Adrian Năstase has lost the presidential race ever since it became evident to his social democrat constituency, made of the webs of civil society entwined in the last decades of the communist rule, that he would be rather a sponsor of capital than of work. He was defeated by the accelerated decline of the industrial workers' social networks that were the backbone of political participation under state socialism. By carrying on the legacy of the Communist Party, the Social Democrats were able until 2004 to shape up the Romanian post-communist polity as a loosened space where individual and corporate interests coexist in mutual indifference and in complete ethic invisibility. Unlike the grand Rokkanian historical cleavages, such recent micro-social divisions are rather immune to partisan mobilization and uninterested to

¹ Cf. Jean BLONDEL, "Introduction", in Jean BLONDEL, Maurizio COTTA (eds), *The Nature of Party Government. A Comparative European Perspective*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2000, p. 8.

² *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. GERTH, C. WRIGHT MILLS, Oxford University Press, New York, 1958, pp. 77-128.

³ I borrow the language and part of the argument from Gil EYAL, Iván SZELENYI, and Eleanor TOWNSLEY, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists. The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe*, Verso, London and New York, 1998.

be represented through ideological debates, legal norms and political competition. In an era when most parties have become "parties without partisans" and political behaviors prove to be more and more fragmented and individualized¹, the Social Democrat Party knew for a significant amount of time how to act as a mediator and, in this capacity, relied upon the participative practices of the groups of interests that dominate civil society (trade unions, entrepreneurs' or professional associations, churches² etc.).

Indeed, one of the most hazardous illusions of Romanian post-communism is perhaps the uncritical identification of civil society with the civic associations, the NGOs, and the intellectual elites. Indeed, for most Romanians, the very notion of civil society does not refer to the citizens' participation in the public life through grass roots associations, but to the "professionals", which chair non-governmental organizations. With the significant exception of the Social Democrats, the other parties, notwithstanding if they had a past prior to 1948, or were thriving in winning the popular vote (in 1996 and 2004) nurture this misconception and strive to legitimate themselves through policies aimed at promoting human rights and civil liberties. Hence, they were not aware that the ideology of *individual rights in society* is accompanied by a "recession of politics" that translates the inability of democratic politics to govern a *society of individuals*³. In this respect, civil society should rather be construed as a multiple and unstable network of disorganized solidarities in need of a mediation and unmoved by partisan representation.

It is fair to say the Social Democrat Party of Romania, as a scion of the Communist Party and the dominant post-communist party, extended its mediation across a coalescence of loose and uneven networks of a civil society that was, and perhaps still is reluctant to turn into a legal society. Indeed, this society is shaped by former residents of state socialism, who used to live enclosed in an *Eigen-Sinn*⁴, in a space where they could almost peacefully indulge in a homegrown individual micro-autonomy, largely tolerated by the communist authorities. They did not contrive competition, but were impelled to react whenever faced with contending interests at their own level and within their individual or corporate reach. In the realm of state socialism, people got in the end a clear share of sovereignty, they were able to discriminate in any particular setting of society between what they could actually do to improve their status or condition and what they could not do, and did not even need to bother about, regardless of the official position of the Party.

The networks of obligations weaved in the framework of socialist agriculture⁵ and reshuffled by its dismissal are still performing in the rural areas to the benefit of the Social Democrats. Instead, the massive privatizations undertaken by the government from 2001 to 2004 made urban populations related to industrial work

¹ Russel J. DALTON, Martin P. WATTENBERG, "Partisan Change and the Democratic Process", in Russel J. DALTON, Martin P. WATTENBERG (eds), *Parties without Partisans. Political Change in Advanced Industrial Societies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, pp. 261-285.

² Several Social Democrat mayors, in Arad and other towns of the Western regions of the country, are leaders of local Baptist communities rounded up by the party in order to maximize its electoral chances.

³ Marcel GAUCHET, *La démocratie contre elle-même*, Gallimard, Paris, 2002, pp. 326-385.

⁴ For the definition of the concept and its historical embodiments see Alf LÜDTKE, *Eigen-Sinn*, Ergebnisse Verlag, Hamburg, 2002.

⁵ Katherine VERDERY, *The Vanishing Hectare. Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2003, pp. 60-63.

uninteresting for the power brokers of the Social Democrat Party. In return, active and retired workers, for whom industrial work was the only opportunity for social networking and political participation, experienced an aggravated lack of political agency. They were not even convinced by the generous dispensation of welfare, amounting in 2004 to over 10% of the GDP. The members of the Romanian society dislocated and disaffected by the plummeting of the socialist networks of participation to the informal redistribution of public resources, reacted with preemptive obedience to such operations, but did not see them tied to a meaningful order of things, as they used to look at the socialist welfare state¹. The Social Democrat Party acted no longer as a mediator able to make the state and its agencies available to them.

In 1946, the Communist Party proceeded to a political disenfranchisement of the Romanian citizens. The very day the universal suffrage was granted for the first time to all men and women, the vote turned into derision by governmental resolution. For five decades, Romanians were ordered to take part in electoral festivals with predetermined results. Their counterfeit political rights were however balanced by new social prospects that led eventually to a particular type of participation in the make-up of informal public choices. Post-communism defined itself not as a reconstructed state based on representation and as a democratized polity nurtured by the rule of law, but as a political regime that qualifies as democratic since it is simply holding regular multi-party elections. *Particracy* and dualism made sure that these elections are not meant to summarize in a deliberative and legislative body the will and values of the political society, but to measure the share each established political party is entitled to have in the post-electoral negotiation of the executive body. Elections are not conceived as a mirror in which society reflects its cleavages in order to conciliate them without violence², but as a weighing machine for partisan distribution of offices and privileges. In short, elections are not representing society, but introducing the government and reproducing the state. Technically, they are rather *particratic* than democratic. Procedural democracy is pitted against the very meaning of democracy. In post-communist Romania, elections seem to be an instrument of democracy used to disenfranchise for the second time a disaffected sovereign people.

¹ This is, for instance, the conclusion of a significant number of interviews conducted with women workers of Cluj, Denisa Florentina BOTEANU, "Infern sau paradis pierdut? Aspecte din viața muncitoarelor din Cluj-Napoca", in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Orală*, V, 2004, pp. 306-336.

² Cf. the definitions of Pierre ROSANVALLON, *La crise de l'État-providence*, nouvelle édition, Seuil, Paris, 1992, p. 104.